FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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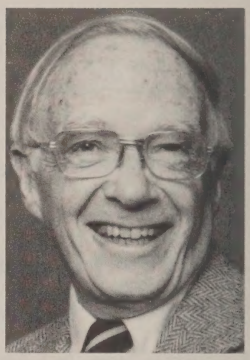
Cover Photograph by Janet Gnall



One of the most exciting results of Fellowship in Prayer's Worldwide Day of Prayer and Meditation to Help Heal Mother Earth was the flood of letters we received from all over the country and from all parts of the world: Moscow, Lisbon, Bombay, Tokyo, Manchester, Milan, Port Harcourt (Nigeria), Manila, Madrid, Aberdeen, and Marseille, to name but a few.

In addition to requesting copies of this publication, the writers almost unanimously expressed a yearning for community; for some way of being in touch with others who share their spiritual insights, questions, and experiences.

In the breakdown of traditional family, social, political, and religious values and structures that we see all around us, there is a deep need for the healing reconciliation that community brings.

Writing in a recent issue of *Creation* magazine, Danny Martin points out that "true community does not involve acceptance of a group's authority or the opinions of others." Rather, he says, "The purpose of true community is to assist people toward self-knowledge; to help them along their individual inner journeys."

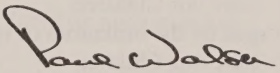
Whether the members of a community meet in each others' homes or keep in touch via the FAX machine or the postman, they are sharing in the life force that is at the heart of all things. Martin writes:

> In the community setting we can create a situation where we can suspend our opinions and judgments in order to listen to each other. In this way we generate a kind of social superconductivity by having lots of energy in the interchange while keeping the temperature low. When you really listen to somebody else, what they say becomes a part of you whether you like it or not. In genuine dialog, a common pool is created in which people suspend their own opinions so that they can listen to and appreciate the opinions of others. And, at some point, we recognize that this common pool of information is more important than the separate pools. From this realization, a state of high intelligence emerges which allows for new things to come into being.
>
> It is when we make ourselves vulnerable that the process starts, for it is at that stage that judgment is truly suspended and people really begin to

hear one another . . . The result is a communion that delights and nourishes each individual and gives power to the community: the power to call forth life in others. Through the sharing of experience, understanding, reflection and decision, the community, without fear of judgment, builds a vital trust.

My deepest feeling about community is that we are not creating anything in that setting, but we are being created. We are called together by the life of the universe, held together in creative tension by symbols emerging from the unconscious, that resonate with and bring new life to ancient insights. . . . It is very ordinary, but its ordinariness is the vehicle for the extraordinary. It is not measured on its successes or its failures, but on its perseverance.

As a start toward the formation of such spiritual communities—on a neighborhood, bioregional, or global level—I propose printing the names and addresses in this publication of women and men who would like to share their spiritual needs, insights, experiences, and practices with each other. If you would like to be included in such a list—so that others can get in touch with you and vice versa—just drop me a note. Dr. Martin believes the future of religion may lie in just such small nonhierarchical spiritual communities. He may be right.



Paul Walsh
President

"The child has the breath and spirit of life. The child, present here and now, is the past embodied and the future becoming. The child wants to survive, to be protected, to develop. The child needs peace, with justice and freedom." With these words, religious leaders representing forty countries and some dozen faiths began their prayers at Princeton Theological Seminary on July 25, 1990. They were participating in The World Conference on Religion and Peace and had selected as their theme, "The World's Religions for the World's Children." Their supplications (which follow), implore us to put an end to the cruelty that helpless children are suffering in every part of the world today.

Save our Children

Tortured by hunger and thirst
Save our Children
Ravaged from preventable disease
Save our Children
Mutilated by cruel customs and practices
Save our Children
Savaged by the brutalities of war
Save our Children
Victimized by violence
Save our Children
Broken by exploitative child labor
Save our Children
Traumatized by sexual abuse
Save our Children
Damaged by drug abuse
Save our Children
Poisoned by environmental pollution
Save our Children

Protect our Children

Stunted with suffering
Protect our Children

Rejected without name
Protect our Children
Denied belonging
Protect our Children
Withered without hope
Protect our Children
Thwarted by limitations due to race, religion, age, sex, class or caste
Protect our Children
Refused honor and integrity
Protect our Children
Deprived beauty, joy, laughter
Protect our Children
Uprooted because of war, famine, disaster
Protect our Children
Burdened by the debts of preceding generations
Protect our Children
Aged before they could be young
Protect our Children
Denied freedom, justice and peace
Protect our Children

Care for our Children

Nurtured by love, upheld by guidance, uplifted by understanding
Care for our Children
Provided with food, clean water, shelter, clothing and health needs
Care for our Children
Enriched by a safe and clean environment
Care for our Children
Empowered by education, challenged by opportunity, and strengthened by the fullness of rights
Care for our Children
Encouraged to participate in the polities and economies that shape our future
Care for our Children
Ensured health and health care
Care for our Children
Enhanced by taking their place in a global family enriched by differences
Care for our Children
Developed with freedom, justice and peace
Care for our Children

The child is life and miracle, beauty and mystery, fulfillment and promise. Save the child. Protect the child. Care for the child.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky

God regards with merciful eyes not what you are nor what you have been but what you wish to be.

The Author of THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

There is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood, of home. People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education.

Dostoevsky

Who can love anything that God made too much? God's wisdom, infinite wisdom, and goodness and glory are in it. What would a world be if everything were loved as it ought to be!

Thomas Traherne

Mozart has a place in theology . . . because he knew something about creation in its total goodness. . . . He had heard, and causes those who have ears to hear, even today, what we shall not see until the end of time—the whole context of providence. As though in the light of this end, he heard the harmony of creation, to which the shadow also belongs, but in which the shadow is not darkness. . . . The cheerfulness in this harmony is not without its limits, but the light shines all the more brightly because it breaks forth from the shadow. . . . Mozart saw this light no more than we do, but he heard the whole world of creation enveloped by this light.

Karl Barth

To one who waits all things reveal themselves, so long as you have the courage not to deny in the darkness what you have seen in the light.

Coventry Patmore

The Master said, Who expects to be able to go out of a house except by the door? How is it then that no one follows this Way of ours?

Confucius

If we were able to see God's image in our neighbor, do you think weapons and generals would be needed?

Mother Teresa

Islam—the Silent Dimension

SYED VAHIDUDDIN

A Moslem speaks about Tawajjah, *the holiest part of his religion, turning one's face to God.*

When I think of prayer, I think of it as a kind of dialogue, as a kind of communication with God. What is generally called *tawajjuh* is, I think, the greatest moment in the experience of prayer. That is to say, my attention should be directed towards God all the time. I do not conceive of prayer in terms of certain moments, in terms of certain fixed texts, in terms of certain repetitions or certain known formulas but in terms of the total attitude, in terms of my whole response to what I feel about God, in adversity, in thankfulness. Prayer for me is an uninterrupted dialogue. What is called interruption is only due to our finitude. I consider my whole existence as a kind of attunement to God.

From the very beginning I had a deep religious feeling. This deep religious feeling came to me from my family background. My paternal grandmother was a very devout woman and her life and experience influenced me deeply. My father died when I was about three years old. He was the only son of his mother. She was married early in life, but she was widowed after only two years of her marriage. These two experiences moulded her life and thus influenced me too. Why? Because I found that in our day to day experience, especially in these our times, humanity becomes totally dissatisfied with the order of the universe: the moment we are frustrated, the moment we lose something, we think everything is lost. She reacted differently. She lost what was most important and precious to her, and she had nothing else to rely upon. She lost her husband, she lost her only son and yet I did not perceive in her any resentment against the order of the universe. This total acceptance moved me very much and I found in her really an example of what Islam means or should mean: a total resignation and submission to the divine order. I still remember how, even in her old age, she used to recite in the morning

Dr. Syed Vahiddudin is head of the Department of Comparative Religion at the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, New Delhi. His remarks come from an interview with F. Toll in Encounter *(Documents for Muslim-Christian Understanding).*

the *Qur'anic* verse from the *sura al-Rahman* (55.12). "Which is it, of the favours of your Lord, that ye deny?" This still haunts my memory. This woman, in her life, in her contentment, in her peace, in her grief influenced me deeply. She lost her husband, she lost her son but still she retained that which comes from our total submission to God. This is how I was introduced to Islam from the very early years of my life.

Then, from the very beginning, I had a very deep sense of the unknown, *al-hayb*. The feeling for the unknown, I think, is the very essence of religion. It means that I do not only accept what is given to me but I also have a feeling for what is not given, for what is not known to me and what cannot be known to me. I feel that in this world I am just overshadowed and overpowered by the unknown. The unknown is much vaster, infinitely more than what is perceptible and what can be known. This feeling for *al-hayb* has always been characteristic of my personal experience.

It follows from what I mentioned that I grew up as an orphan. The whole atmosphere at home was rather gloomy and sad. My grandmother had not enough means to provide for the education of her grandchildren. And my mother on her part could not get any pension or suste-

> This feeling of the proximity of God, this nearness to God, this association with God, the feeling that God never leaves me, this God's total presence, I find very characteristic of my own religious life. This is why I think of God always, not at certain periods of time only. This continuous, uninterrupted rapport with the divine is what has made me a very religious man.

nance from the government because her husband died so early in life. She depended on her parents for her sustenance. This double bereavement, the agony of my grandmother and the anguish of my mother, had a deep impact on my own personal experience and on the development of my religious consciousness. Yet I never thought of denying God simply because there was anguish, agony. Humanity had to pass through suffering. I thought suffering had a meaning and that there is in it an element of compensation whether we think of compensation in a low or cheap way, or in more spiritual terms. Our sufferings and what we are deprived of are somehow atoned and compensated for whether in life

here or in the life to come, in ways which we do not or may not understand, until the last moments of our life or only when we have crossed its threshold. That suffering has a meaning, an import, has always been my conviction.

I have not much to say about my earliest education. The *Qur'an* came first, and then western school education. Only when I grew older, during my time at college and University, the new factors began to appear. I read the sceptics. I still remember reading some essays and books by Bertrand Russell. They impressed me and I became rather indifferent to religion and doubts crept into my mind about the validity or religious values and norms. But this period lasted only a short while because I found that in spite of all scepticism I could not evade the overpowering consciousness of the *hayb* which I never lost in my life.

Somehow or other this persisted in me and even now persists, this terrible consciousness that I am surrounded or overwhelmed, enveloped by forces which I do not understand. This world is only a very small segment of reality, or what we call the world. Astronomers think of worlds without number. This also does not impress me very much. Because I think apart from the worlds which are without number there are other worlds without number of which the astronomers speak. Reality may indeed be hierarchical, there may be different segments of reality. When I read the *sura al-Fatihah*, where God is referred to as *rabb-al-alamin*, I am very much taken because I think of the worlds, spiritual worlds, of which we cannot have any idea and I think of man as just a part of this universe which is inexhaustible. The concept of the inexhaustible is in fact the other concept (in addition to that of *al-hayb*) which I find very important in my consideration of the philosophy of religion. That is to say: reality is inexhaustible, conceptually, because whatever we think of reality, we cannot grasp it.

God, as reality, is unapproachable. Some so-called mystics teach that by intuition or whatever other name given to it, they can take hold of God. I think this is a great illusion. No intuition, no form of knowledge is able to fathom what is unfathomable, ineffable. This is one of the constituent parts of my experience.

Now, a few words about how I pray. Naturally, I have different kinds of prayer. At one time, formerly, I did not bother much about ritual prayer, especially when I was very young, in my school days. But I respect those who pray and lay great emphasis on ritual prayer because I

think that in ritual prayer we participate in the history of our community, *umma*. When I offer my *salat* at fixed times which I generally do these days, I find that I have been somehow or other associated with the history of Islam and especially with the person of the Prophet. Ritual prayer forges an association with the life of the Prophet which we cannot have otherwise. And then I also go for congregational prayers, although not regularly. There also I find the same collective consciousness aroused which makes me think of Islam as a kind of a global, open community. This feeling of community, this feeling of participation, this awakening of historical consciousness helps me and moves me to observe ritual prayers. But I do not make a fetish out of it. If I miss one prayer, I do not feel very upset. I think that ritual prayer is part and parcel of the Islamic way of life, and no doubt if somebody feels strongly about it he or she should not miss it by any means. But that does not make me very concerned about its strict observance.

I give most emphasis to prayers in solitude, especially at night. I mean these nightly vigils: to wake up at night and to think of God and to pray and to turn towards God in my own way. Occasionally it may be through reciting *Qur'anic* phrases in the context of some world troubles, problems. I seek God's support in patience and prayer (Q2, 45) repeating many times that God is sufficient unto us, and that God is the best of protectors (Q3, 173). To think of God and to seek God's help: that gives me great consolation. I am reminded of what Hafiz says. He said that what made him what he was, were nightly vigils, to wake up at night, to think of God and to cry. It is this tenderness the Qur'an also speaks of, mentioning those who when they read the Qur'an "their hearts shake and their eyes brim over with tears" (cf. Q, 5,83; 8,3). This kind of tenderness is very precious to me. Baba Farid, the Indian mystic, used to say whenever he was pleased with somebody: May God give you *soz!*; that is to say, that kind of anguish. You may be surprised that Baba Farid was praying for something which may not be very agreeable to most of us. But what is meant is that sensitivity for the unknown which is accompanied by a peculiar type of emotion which can only be characterized as a subtle agitation of mind and body.

So when I wake up early in the morning I just think of God in whatever way I like. This thinking of God, especially at night, I think, is very useful for our spiritual development. Apart from this prayer at night I also think of God whenever I can and wherever I am, even in society

Janet Gnall

which may seem to be very worldly and to have nothing to do with religion, in the theatre, in the cinema or in the street. I think of God. This uninterrupted turning of my attention to God I find very heartening. It brings great spiritual elation. What impresses me most is the Qur'anic attitude when it says: "*La takhaf wa la tahzan*" (Q. 28, 7) "Don't be afraid and don't grieve," God indeed is with us. This feeling of the proximity of God, this nearness to God, this association with God, the feeling that God never leaves me, this God's total presence, I find very characteristic of my own religious life. This is why I think of God always, not at certain periods of time only. This continuous, uninterrupted rapport with the divine is what has made me a very religious man.

June Moreau
July 1990

Give the Master Your Power of Attorney

WILLIAM M. STEPHENS

When it becomes impossible to pray or to meditate, there is one last resort.

The ways of the masters are inscrutable and unfathomable by the standards of the world. Yet, it is said, the merest glance or whim of a God-realized being can change the lives of countless generations to come.

In the late 19th century, a great lover of God called Ramakrishna lived near Calcutta, India. Born in a tiny village to a family of pious but poverty-stricken brahmins, Ramakrishna never learned to read or write. Nevertheless he became known to the world as a *Sadguru*, or Perfect Master, who used the power of God's love to transform the lives of all who knew him.

To Americans in general, Ramakrishna is known primarily through his celebrated disciple Vivekananda, who brought the science of yoga to America. Few have heard the story of the Master's work with Girish Ghose, a brilliant but dissolute playwright who often came to see Ramakrishna. As a direct result of the Master's contact with Ghose, sweeping changes came about in the Calcutta theatre, which in turn raised the status of women throughout India.

Girish Ghose was a recognized genius and a leading light of the Bengali theatre. After his beloved wife died at the age of thirty, Ghose lost all faith in God. For fifteen years he was a notorious drunkard, a smoker of opium, a patron of brothels, but still the darling of the Bohemian set of Calcutta. Despite his wayward habits, he continued to write and to perform with brilliance. Two of his plays produced during this period ran successfully for more than five years. All his plays were religious in tone, dealing with the lives of Buddha, Rama and other saints and masters. His underlying theme was that religion is dreary, but men of God are fascinating and inspirational.

All his life, Ghose had searched for a spiritual teacher who would measure up to his expectations. So when he heard that a holy man lived at Dakshineswar, near Calcutta, he went to see him, expecting, as usual, to be disappointed. He arrived drunk and boisterous. "I've got no use for

A Tennessee attorney, William M. Stephens is writing a book called The Path Through the Heart.

God," he told Ramakrishna. "That's why I drink—to show God what I think of Him."

Ramakrishna grinned impishly and said: "Why not drink to God? Maybe God drinks too."

Taken aback, Ghose said, "Why would God drink?"

"If not, how would God create such a topsy-turvy world?"

Ghose frowned as he digested that; then he asked Ramakrishna what a guru was good for.

"A guru is like a procurer," said Ramakrishna. "A procurer arranges for the meeting of a man with a woman. A guru introduces the seeker to God." The Master waved his hand, dismissing the subject. "You don't need to worry about gurus. You already have one if you only knew it."

After Ghose left, someone in the room said to Ramakrishna, "That man is vile and vulgar. Why do you put up with him?"

Ramakrishna smiled. "He is a great lover of God."

Early one morning, after a night on the town, Ghose arrived at Dakshineswar in a tonga, a horse-drawn carriage. Asking the driver to wait, he went looking for Ramakrishna, who was seated among a group of devotees. Observing the arrival, the Master said, "I see he is sober, but he has left a flask of liquor in the tonga. Go fetch it for me, but don't let him see you."

Ghose joined the group and sat quietly while the Master discoursed about God and the spiritual path. Finally Ghose became restless and craved a drink, so he got up to leave the room. "You don't need to get it," Ramakrishna said. "I had it fetched for you. Here. Drink, my son."

Despite his surprise and humiliation, Ghose took the bottle and drank greedily. But, from that day, it was noted that he seemed to be drinking less and less. He continued to come to see Ramakrishna, but the visits brought him no peace of mind. He was troubled about the life he was leading, but at the same time he abhorred the thought of austerity or discipline, and he could not make himself pray. Despite the coarseness of most of his friends, he enjoyed their fawning attitude toward him, and he reveled in the adulation of the theatre crowd. He was constantly torn between his longing for God and his desires of the flesh.

One day, in a state of desperation, Ghose went to Ramakrishna and begged for help. "I cannot pray," he said, "and I cannot meditate. Killing myself would be easier. At the same time, I can no longer tolerate the person I have become. What can I do?"

Tom Dunham

Ramakrishna said, "Just think of God four times a day. It's simple as that. Think of God before each meal and before going to sleep at night. That will be enough if you do it wholeheartedly. Can you do that?"

After a long pause, Ghose frowned and shook his head. "I am an artist. Half the time I don't know when I'm eating or where I'm sleeping. Besides, I can't tolerate rules, rituals, or routine. I simply cannot think of God at any set time. I'm afraid it's impossible."

"In that case," Ramakrishna said, "there is only one thing to do. You will have to give me your power of attorney."

"Power of attorney?" Ghose stared at the Master in bewilderment. "You mean you will represent me? You will pray in my place? And I won't have to do anything?"

Ramakrishna smiled. "You can stop worrying about your soul. Leave everything to me. From now on, you can be a true artist, eating whatever is offered to you, sleeping where you happen to be, and asking nothing

Just think of God four times a day. Think of God before each meal and before going to sleep at night. That will be enough if you do it wholeheartedly. Can you do that?

of anyone. You will have no responsibility of any kind—except you must live by one rule: *As thou willest from within me, O God, so shall I do.*"

"You mean I must be totally resigned to the will of God?"

"Yes. You must live like the dust in the air, completely free to go wherever the Lord wills it."

After further deliberation, Ghose shrugged. "I'll try." And from that time, a subtle change began taking place in his attitude and his habits. He soon learned that it was far from easy to carry out his part of the bargain he had made, but the rewards were rich beyond measure. His own ego could never be asserted, he came to realize, only the divine ego of the Lord in his heart. He could not take personal credit for any of his successes or failures. The Lord deserved the credit. Every action, thought and desire had to be dedicated to God.

Within a few short years, Ghose had become transformed. In the process, a transformation took place in the theatres of Bengal. Traditionally in India (as in Elizabethan England), the stage belonged exclusively to male actors. All female roles were played by men and boys. Ghose

changed all that by bringing women onto the stage. He introduced literally dozens of great natural talents to the theatre—not only as actresses but as writers and musicians. And where did he find these talented women? In the brothels, of course, where he had spent so much of his time!

So not only did Ramakrishna reform Girish Ghose. In the process he brought about the reformation of countless women and at the same time reformed the theatre of eastern India. These changes ultimately spread throughout the country.

In such a way does the light emanating from a great Master illumine the minds of men and women for generations and centuries after his physical life has ended.

More Haiku

JUNE MOREAU

Would I exchange
my life for yours
azure butterfly...

I taste
the rainbow
in a raindrop

Gathering
the songs of crickets
my pockets jingle

putting a face
on the snowman
I feel myself smile

nestling,
in parables of sun
a pair of doves

More slender
than the April rain
the stems of violets

Honeysuckle
in full blossom
my eyes are like bees

Three Steps to the Prayer of the Heart

JAN BRESKY

"The Great rabbis would prepare to pray by praying for one hour." Couldn't you begin with five minutes a day?

Most of us have been trained in the set written prayers of our religious traditions; but few, if any, have been trained in the prayer of the heart. It is erroneously assumed that our ability to speak directly to God needs no development or discussion.

True sharing with God can be a difficult process for many people. There seem to be enormous obstacles to achieving oneness with our Lord. Some believe they are unworthy of such an honor. (But did God not make us, the human species, the crown of Creation? God loves us, and desires to help us.) Others are reluctant to pray because they are not sure God exists. Still others claim that God does exist but is not powerful enough to change things. Prayer gives us a direct experience of God and it is during that experience we gain true knowledge of Divine existence and power. God has the power to do anything but may or may not choose to answer our prayers in the way that we wish. In other words, God hears all prayers and answers them; but sometimes the answer is, "No."

Still others may wish to pray, but never find the time to do so. To them, I suggest that they budget five minutes a day for individual prayer. Five minutes seems like a brief period of time, but it is the beginning of a truly spiritual life. By being "in touch" with God even for this short amount of time, the other aspects of the religious life, service, study and sacrifice, will begin to make greater sense and fulfill their proper perspective. Soon you will want to increase the five minutes to ten, then fifteen, maybe even thirty minutes of prayer daily.

Rabbi Jan Bresky is the spiritual leader of the Jewish Media Relations Council and Congregation Bnai Emmunah (People of Faith), in Dunedin, FLA. After an arduous, three-year-long battle with leukemia, he is recovering from a bone marrow transplant and is again teaching and writing about God, prayer and ethics.

But how do we pray? What do we do? Let me suggest the following three steps:

STEP I: Relaxation and Agenda

Jewish tradition teaches that the great rabbis would prepare to pray by praying for one hour. This means that there needs to be preparation before one launches into prayer. This preparation has two factors: relaxation and agenda.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to pray if your mind is concerned with mundane thoughts: Who will take out the trash? When will the oil in the car be changed? So too, prayer is difficult if we are so busy that our minds and bodies are "racing" while we attempt to pray.

We must take some time to relax before we pray. We must discipline

Tom Dunham

our minds to turn off the unimportant elements of life when we attempt to communicate with the Divine.

What is the purpose of that sharing with God? What are we trying to learn? What shall we ask for? What blessing shall we thank God for? Sometimes it is good to mentally prepare an agenda of two or three items we wish to discuss with God. In this way our prayers become more focused.

STEP II: Let Go and Let God

This expression, which I first heard from Dr. Robert Schuller, has great merit. The most successful people in the world realize they cannot do it all. As a result, they delegate power and authority to others to achieve the task. We cannot control many of the elements of our lives. We must realize that our personal plans are subservient to God's Master plan. All this makes it necessary for us to give over to God the authority to change our lives. Surrender is one of the most difficult things for us to achieve in attempting to live a spiritual life. "O Lord, not my empire, but your Kingdom."

After we relax and set our agenda and empower God to change our lives, we are now ready to empty our heart and soul to God. We may use words. We may use gestures. We may simply think thoughts. Every person communicates differently. As long as you are reaching God and you will know when you are, you are doing "the right thing."

STEP III: Listen

The main prayer of Judaism, the *Shema*, taken from the book of Deuteronomy, proclaims, "Hear O Israel." The reason it says "Hear" is probably because Jews, like most people, do not listen. Far too often, we complete our speech, words and ideas to God, and then shut off the prayer.

Prayer is communication. Good communication is a two-way street. We must listen as well as speak.

It is very unpopular in this age of psychoanalysis, psychosis and charlatanism to say that God communicates with us directly or even indirectly.

The fact is . . . God does.

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

Members of Fellowship in Prayer in 66 countries form a global spiritual community of men and women—many of whom organize groups or correspond with each other in order to share spiritual insights, and to pray for each other.

If you would like to hear from people in your area (or overseas), please send us your name and address, and we will list it in our next issue.

Name _____

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_____

Telephone (optional) _____

God will speak to us . . . any of us.

It may be a flash of an idea that comes to mind, a new insight. Yes, it may even be in rare cases, direct human language; but none of this can be achieved, if we are not listening. It is therefore necessary to reserve some time of silence at the end of prayer. This is God's opportunity to speak directly to us.

* * * * *

Prayer is direct communication with God. Through it we gain greater strength, courage, faith, hope and insight. It must be practiced every day without fear, or excuse, for at least five minutes. Prayer is the beginning of a deeper, more fulfilling spiritual life.

Relax, formulate your agenda, let go and let God touch you. Empty your heart and soul to God, listen for God's response.

Do this and then watch your life grow and blossom.

Impermanence

CHAGDUD TULKU RINPOCHE

A Tibetan Lama offers an antidote to suffering.

To understand the roots of delusion that cause suffering, we have to recognize that our ordinary life experience is devoid of any lasting truth, it is impermanent. In our experience we perceive everything to be solid; there's earth, fire, wind and all the elements, and there is our physical body, all of which serves as our reference point for reality. It all seems very true because we personally experience it. But this truth doesn't last long, it changes easily, being adapted by almost anything that impacts it. It is impermanent.

Outwardly, we understand that everything is impermanent. We know the seasons change one into the other and night into day, day into night. But further, our own body is impermanent. Once it wasn't, now it is, and sometime it won't be. "Well," we think, "though my body may be impermanent, my mind remains the same." But the mind doesn't remain the same. At one time, all we needed was our mother, then as we grew our needs grew, we needed toys and friends. Now in adulthood we have more complex wants and needs on into old age with its particular changes in mind and attitude. Even in the moment our mind is constantly changing—happy, sad—hope, fear—good, bad—a never ending procession of ongoing change. Impermanence permeates our reality, and yet we habitually cling to and make plans upon the various facets of our life as if they were lasting.

First we must understand that all phenomena in our ordinary world are impermanent. Take a hill for example. A hill is not permanent. It can

Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, Tibetan Lama, meditation master, artist and poet, fled the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959. While a refugee in India and Nepal he helped establish and administer several Tibetan refugee camps until 1979 when he was invited to the United States by American students. Since then Rinpoche has founded a number of meditation centers in the United States, and currently resides in northern California. His article was excerpted from a teaching on "Impermanence" that he gave at a meditation retreat in 1987.

Paul M. Schrock

be washed away, bulldozed, or blown apart. It can be removed. It is not permanent.

It is not singular, either. The hill isn't really a hill. It's really a composite of many other things—dirt, rocks, gravel, and so on. So it isn't even a singular object. It is a composite. It is subject to the effects of other things upon it all the time. It is not permanent, it is not an object in and of itself, nor is it free of outside influence. For daily meditation practice it is important to learn to examine reality according to these three criteria: is it permanent, is it singular, and is it free of outside influence?

We can apply this same examination process to our own bodies. Upon examination we find that this body is a composite of many things—bones, nerves, muscles, flesh, not at all singular. And it is in a constant state of change. Someday this physical experience that we relate to in such a solid and meaningful way won't be any longer. One way or the other, it will be lost, we're not free to keep it.

The same process of examination applies to thoughts. There are so many thoughts, some happy and some sad. None last very long, they are all impermanent.

Everything in our ordinary reality is the same—not permanent, not singular, and not free of outer influence. Our experience is like that of a child chasing after a rainbow. The child thinks it is substantial and graspable, but will never be able to catch it. Similarly, our reality is only a display, an illusory appearance.

Most beings are lost in the labyrinth of their experience of the outer world and of their inner world as a reaction to the outer world. By habit and by training we experience both to be true, in the same manner as a dream is experienced to be true from within the context of that dream. In our consuming involvement with ordinary reality we invest life with permanence and we experience attachment, aversion, hope, and fear. We look outside for truth, wandering through the forest of phenomena, examining every footprint to see where it goes. We never get to our nature, to the place of fulfillment, because we wander in that which cannot lead to fulfillment. Conditions become more complex and suffering becomes deeper. We get caught more and more by the dream, like a fly caught on flypaper.

This is the way each being is caught in suffering, whoever we are, wherever we are, and whatever our experiences are. Once we fully understand our own predicament—the entrapment of ordinary assump-

Howard Brown

tion—we further realize that all beings are likewise operating within the same delusion, suffering greatly from these perpetual misunderstandings. Compassion arises within us, the wish that sufferings would cease and that all beings might awaken to that which is beyond the dream, beyond suffering.

One might ask, "Does waking up mean that everything that we see, hear, feel and taste will disappear because it is like a dream?"

No, it isn't that reality as we know it would disappear, but that our reaction to it and the suffering we experience as a result of it would diminish. If you are dreaming about a very frightening situation and suddenly you realize that you are dreaming, the dream itself doesn't necessarily disappear but the fear felt in that experience does.

Now we suffer in life helpless to our hopes, fears, likes and dislikes, overwhelmed by all kinds of things both good and bad. If instead we realize, even as it is happening, that this is an illusion manifesting, a

dream occurrence, we don't invest it with the same validity. If we start to reduce the amount of attention it gets, it doesn't hold the same truth, the same power. There is automatically less attachment and less aversion when we understand that whatever it is, it is impermanent. This understanding is the antidote to suffering. It directly reduces delusion so in turn it directly reduces suffering.

Instead of being caught up in our dream-like experience—be it happiness or sadness, the object that we see, or ourselves, the subject seeing the object—we need to look for the essence and try to find that which is beyond impermanence.

To know essence or not know it is the difference between two roads: the road of the dream which perpetuates endless cycles of suffering, or the great road of realization. To know this nature is called great knowing. To live only in accordance with ordinary reality and the seeming truth of things is called ordinary knowing. Great knowing is the basis for meditation. Through meditation one can achieve actualization or transformation from the ordinary truth to the extraordinary truth.

To fully learn how to make use of meditation in order to accomplish this realization, a truly qualified teacher is essential, someone who has revealed their own true nature and is thus capable of helping us awaken to the same recognition. Once we have been introduced to the nature of absolute mind, the teacher can show us methods to break the habits towards attachment and aversion that make it difficult for us to remain in direct recognition. The teacher also demonstrates how to cultivate and practice the selfless aspiration to awaken from the dream in order that others might also awaken to the absolute nature of wisdom. This is the impulse that propels us onto the path, and is the motivation and the purpose for engaging the path.

As we overcome our assumptions that reality is permanent, singular and free of outer influence, our delusion is reduced and the essence of pure awareness becomes obvious. It's as if the film of false assumption

> We never get to our nature, to the place of fulfillment, because we wander in that which cannot lead to fulfillment. Conditions become more complex and suffering becomes deeper. We get caught more and more by the dream, like a fly caught on flypaper.

that now separates us from our true nature becomes thinner and thinner until a crack occurs and we realize that which is our nature, beyond impermanence. When we reduce delusion, the absolute can more easily shine through and this naturally reveals the essence, the nature of truth.

Impermanence meditation is a crucial element in maturing the mind. This method is indispensable to the process of reducing habits and clinging and gaining recognition of the essential nature of our experience. When taken to fruition, the inherent essence of the mind is fully revealed, inseparable from the unceasing capacity to free others from the cycles of suffering.

The Tree of the Great Peace

FROM THE IROQUOIS NATION

I am Dekanawideh and with the chiefs of the Five Nations
I plant the Tree of the Great Peace . . .

Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great Peace . . .
the Great White Roots of Peace . . .

Any man of any nation
may trace the roots to their source and be welcome
to shelter
beneath the Great Peace . . .

I Dekanawideh
and the chiefs of our Five Nations of the Great Peace
we now uproot the tallest pine

Into the cavity thereby made
we cast all weapons of war

Into the depths of the earth
into the deep underneath . . .
we cast all weapons of war

We bury them from sight forever . . .
and we plant again the tree . . .
Thus shall the Great Peace be established . . .

Brooks Walsh

Ask Angela

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Do you have a question of the heart or spirit that needs attention? Angela would love to help. Please write to her c/o F.i.P., 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542, and she will give you her answer in our next issue.

Dear Angela,

Do you ever feel very nervous and completely stressed out? Do you have any advice for those of us who have trouble managing stress? Many thanks!

Sincerely,
Frazzled

Dear Frazzled,

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. I am sure many of my friends will be surprised to learn that I am a jittery dog. Though I may be wise, I am not always calm. I have a special nervous gene which keeps me uptight. My environment also plays a significant role in how edgy I am. I do not respond well to dogs five times my size, loud noises, mail carriers, children, and my own shadow. Stressful situations in my life include getting powdered, soaped, or sprayed, having my blankie washed, getting a flea bath, and being accidentally locked in the basement. When I am required to do two things at once, like walk *and* sniff, my blood pressure soars. Another demand I find stressful is being asked to walk faster than is naturally comfortable for me. The biggest stress I have to cope with is being alone in the house without humans for long periods of time. It is stressful to keep myself adequately companioned and entertained all day. I must run to each window to see whether someone I love is coming back. I must protect the house from mailmen, meter readers, neighbors, other dogs, and delivery people.

One last environmental stress is living with my housemate and comrade. Although two noses are always better than one, living with a dog who is bigger than I keeps me on edge. I have to watch my comrade very carefully at every moment to make sure he isn't getting more . . . As you can see, being an edgy pup keeps my life bouncy. I spend much of my time struggling toward peace, searching for things that bring relief. I am happy to share with you now some of the stress-management techniques I have found most useful. I have received peace and serenity for anywhere from 3 minutes up to one hour 10 minutes at one time. I am not sure that any of us nervous souls could tolerate being cool, calm, and collected for longer than one hour 10 minutes at a stretch.

I have spoken at an earlier time about the importance of building and using your own sacred space when healing needs to take place. Sacred spaces double as great spots to calm down in as well. While you're there, remember to meditate. Use your mantra. If you don't have one, make one up. Count your Kibbles and don't forget to count your blessings. Sacred spaces are perfect places to offer up a peace prayer.

Go to your own unwashed blankie and stomp on it while you pull on it with your teeth. Snorkel your nose into the blanket's folds until you sneeze. Sneezing is a wonderful way to let go of all the day's tensions.

I have received 20 to 40 minutes of stress-free living by barking, yodeling, howling, and whimpering. I usually breathe more deeply after I've made five to ten minutes of noise. I choose one or more sounds from the four basic noise groups I've just mentioned. Feel free to make some noise of your own.

To help reduce stress, take frequent catnaps throughout the day. Rest helps build strong nervous systems. Eat dainty amounts of your favorite foods often. Noshing or grazing helps settle down hungry nerve endings. The best foods I've found are: cheese sauce, liverwurst, tuna fish, chicken, cheerios, cheese and crackers, and slightly stale rolls.

Try to get some physical exercise every day if you can. Even though I spend energy running to each window and checking my personal Kibble supply, there is no substitute for the positive effects of air and sun. I sleep much better when I have felt the wind in my ears. Also, trotting and sniffing have been clinically proven to reduce stress.

I find that I am at my most serene for the longest period of time (sometimes up to one hour 10 minutes) when I lie beside my friend Barbara on the couch in total silence while she rubs my chest. I feel calm and

relaxed after we share this quiet cuddling time together. Physical closeness and touching is important for all living creatures—touching does do wondrous things for the nervous system and our ability to cope with stress. I feel that if the whole world spent more time cuddling, many of us might feel calmer more often.

In addition to affection and companionship, nothing helps my nerves more than unabashed praise and acknowledgment. Kind words work miracles and cost so little; praise is like a warm bath for the soul.

When I am no longer able to manage stress, I do the only thing any red-blooded American pup would do in a pinch. I pick myself up by my paws and march down to the deepest, darkest, farthest corner of the basement to my blankie. Here not only does no one find me, no one even remembers I'm here. In some instances, "getting lost" is the ultimate and best stress-reduction technique I know. "Hiding" becomes a gentle rub-down for my frayed nerves. In closing, I can suggest unequivocally that "disappearing" is a reliable method for slowing down the breath and lowering blood pressure.

I hope I have been of some help and hope to those of you who, like me, struggle toward peace.

Faithfully,
Angela

Still Life

As quietly as a floating leaf in autumn,
you kept coming in
to stand beside her bed,
your eyes loving her,
all of her—
weary body wounded past endurance
finally almost at rest, and
her Spirit-Self,
eloquently still yet knowing,
already moving on.

Final breath
was soft and gentle as your presence.
Your eyes reflected her
translucent face,
her passing Spirit
free.

Emily Sargent Councilman

God Keeps His Promises

This morning, all was well
with the world.
It wasn't just that the birds
were singing
to celebrate the tender greening
of the landscape.
It wasn't, even, the sudden
rose-pink on the maple tree
outside my window,
or the new gold of the willow,
nor early-morning mist gentle in the air.
It wasn't just the hint of change,
the subtle tinting
among the trees,
the faintest touch of color.
It wasn't these alone;
it was all of these, and more,
that held my heart
in so much grace.
God has re-enacted the
ancient Genesis of life.
The dependable pattern
reassures the heart.
God keeps His promises.

Then, why this misgiving
fretting at the edges of
my being,

Mother Earth Stefan Martin

this doubt
I refuse to heed
or clothe in words
lest it rob the moment?
Like it or not,
it pursues
like a hound of heaven
until I hear the message.
It is this:
Planet Earth is not safe in
dependable seasons:
snow can surprise us in August;
earthquakes can be felt where
no ground ever shook
before.

We can twist the environment
askew,
out of its intended order,
just as war defaces the earth
and the heart.
"Endangered" is a word we
live with.
The cycle of life,
so reliable each year,
must not be taken for granted—
needs to be defended—in fact.

From the swamp, the red-winged
blackbird
trilled its liquid
notes.
Yes, God keeps His promises
but,
if we don't play fair,
will Mother Earth turn on us?

Perhaps,
perhaps, if we don't listen,
heed
the heart
rather than
the microchip
and money creeds.
Such a still, small voice
nudges
our collective consciousness.
How much time—
a hundred years or
one—
for us to go on our way
expanding,
despoiling,
without a thought of what we've
left behind?

A wildflower
cracks the rock and blooms.
Sap rises within the tree,
invisible,
until the bud bursts.
Like so,
the small voice,
the persistent Word
presses through the winter of
our souls until, in time,
we recognize our partnership
and, before it is too late,
learn
to help God keep His promises.

Barbara Bacon

Nothing Happens by Accident

BILL BABSON

A diagnosis of multiple sclerosis drove this FiP *reader to a spiritual quest that has led him to courage, faith and peace.*

Please send the story of your own "transforming experience" (typed and double spaced), to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Multiple sclerosis (M.S.) forced me to retire three years ago. But, nothing happens by accident! M.S. has given me the opportunity to pursue my search into my own spirituality.

God slowed me down and really got my attention! I'm disabled, but, "things" are not always what "they" appear to be. Without my disability I wouldn't have taken the time to know God so intimately. There is a Purpose to EVERYTHING!

A major illness is truly a Blessing in disguise! I see so.o.o much of God just in the woods behind my house. I can't walk in the woods, but I sit quietly on my back patio and watch and listen. American Indians refer to trees as "the standing people." Not one thing in life could exist without the other! It's so wonderful to be able to observe this life (God in action). Without M.S. I wouldn't have time to smell the flowers! "Clues" come in infinite varieties. And they all provide us with answers to life if we will just learn to "read" them.

I've learned to face life with M.S. with courage. But it's courage mixed with Faith. Faith that nothing happens by accident and I can face ANYTHING with God's Help, and I can't face ANYTHING without God's Help! God knows what I need before I know it! We all want to "do" things for ourselves and I'm no exception, but M.S. prevents me from "doing." I've slowly learned that God will do ALL these things for me if I just LET God. And so.o.o much better than I could have ever done them. The results ALWAYS come in areas where I have no expectations. But without Faith I would get in God's way and probably block His abundance. M.S. has certainly provided the opportunity for me to begin to appreciate that abundance.

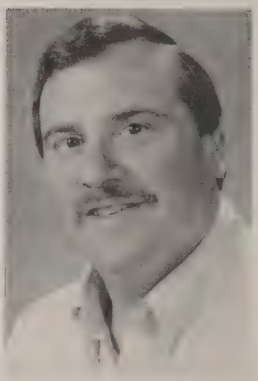
Paul M. Schrock

Bill Babson lives in Duvall, WA.

Work and Rest: Opening the Door

JOE GOSSÉ

Is life in the fast lane the only way?



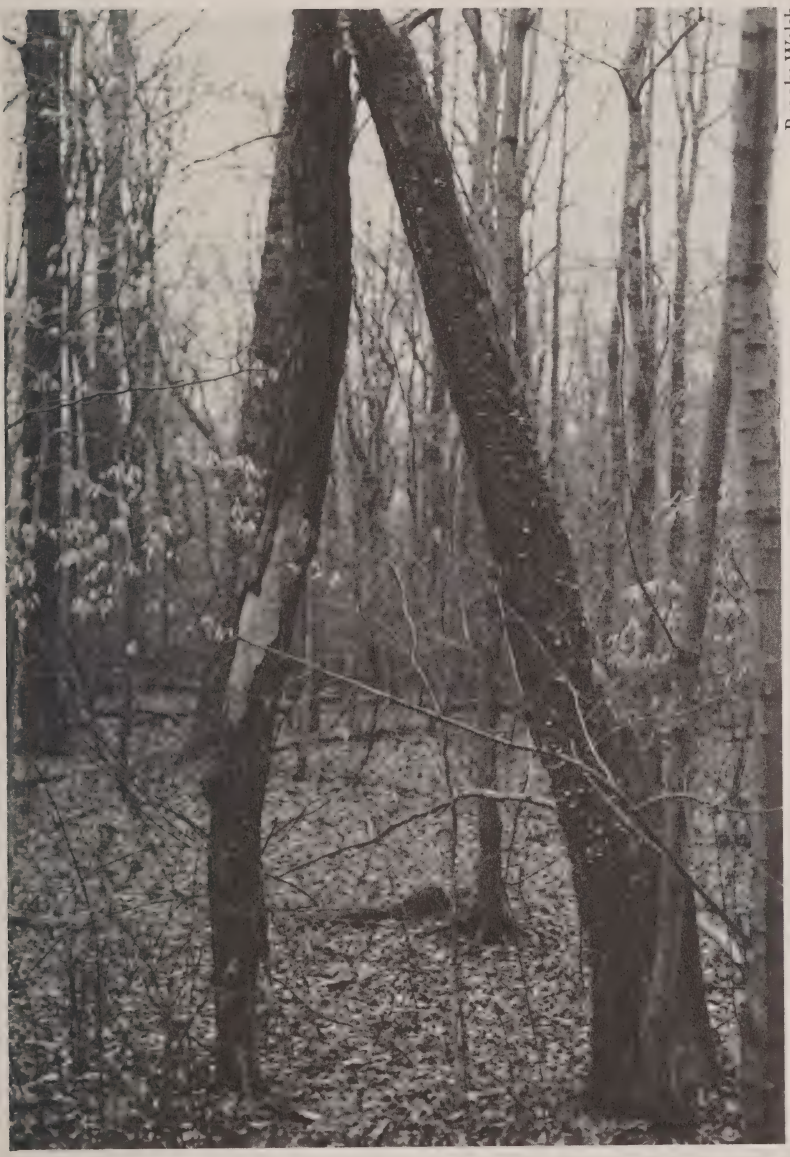
As executives, housewives, teachers, ministers and social workers and in numerous other occupations, we clearly maintain by our actions and by our words the utmost importance of our work. Our lives are brimming over with tasks, purposes and promises. We may simply be pursuing an economically good life or we may be intensely involved in various forms of good social or political work. Psychologists agree that subsequent tension makes up a large part of our everyday experience. The more we strain to achieve, the more tension we feel.

Simple recognition of our tendency to overemphasize work will not lead us out of the thicket. Efficiency and productivity have great power with us due to the many insistent voices in our society and the attraction to these voices from within ourselves. Awareness of the problem alone will not deflect us from our accustomed course; we first have to see a new path that attracts us before we can venture upon it.

We might envisage ourselves as constricted. If we are too devoted to work and purpose, there probably exists a large degree of narrowness and unreward in our lives. If we look carefully, we might perceive only one predominating dimension. We are isolated from almost anything that does not apply to work.

Have you ever noticed that odd little image in John's gospel of Jesus as a door? Jesus speaks of this door as leading in and out freely. The sheep do not simply go into the fold and remain there permanently. They go in and out. They go out to feed, then they come back in to rest. The image of the door points to an important rhythm between work and rest. When we look at this door—Jesus—we are led into a different frame of reference. We are brought in from an exclusive focus on work. There is in this image a steady, regular flow in and out. Tight, purposeful, narrow

A frequent contributor to religious publications, Joe Gossé was for many years a Jesuit. He lives in Allentown, PA.



Brooks Walsh

work gives way to larger, wider, more relaxed fields of refreshment. Movement and wideness are essential to renewal and these elements constitute much of what we call rest. The image of a door conveys well the two poles of rest and work. The door would have no meaning if we did not come in and go out. This seems as natural as day following night. We cannot disagree with the ancient wisdom of Proverbs which assigns equal importance to work and play.

The image of Jesus as door works on the broadest possible level. Movement in and out, movement between rest and work is liberating and fruitful in a variety of human situations. In scientific work, Archimedes struggled with the question of the king's crown: was it gold or not? The solution came to him in the relaxation of the bath. Whether we are constructing a house or painting a picture we must include periodic pauses for rest as well as perspective.

If we acknowledge the importance of the image of the door, we can decide to diminish our stockpile of purposes by unpiling them and discarding some. We would not dispose of our work; it would be a matter

We can decide to diminish our stockpile of purposes by unpiling them and discarding some.

of arranging our tasks as we would a garden. Rest and delight would be constitutive elements of this garden. Force and energy for its order and arrangement could be drawn from the springs and reservoirs which are active during pause and rest. Work, with its planting and pruning, would alternate with wonder at all that buds and blooms.

When we step into the interior recesses of our souls, the image of the door appears again. God's Word, gently rained down with constancy, is there to meet us. Perhaps it seems we begin to pray in a monologue, but as our movement toward rest proceeds, we begin to listen. The voice of the stranger on the road to Emmaus was at first unrecognized. But just as gentle rain soaks into the soil gradually, God persists, and we are led into a constant rhythm back to rest and delight.

If we idolize work, contemplation meets a narrow gate. As we begin to flourish with this communion, we seek out pastures in our everyday life for work and productivity. But in freedom we return within. God's Word is inside and nourished outside. More and more clearly, we see that in and through this door we move freely and have our being.

As the limits of rest and work sink into our mental and emotional fabric, we find ourselves tasting real freedom and integration. Moving back and forth between work and rest, we sense everything come together. We draw away from a single dimension of focus and move toward the achievement of wholeness. Our contemplative life brims over with acknowledgement and gratitude.

Interfaith Network

Dear Friends,

I write to ask you a favor. I would like to correspond with people in your area about the answers to prayer and about their love for God and what God has done for them in their lives. If they would like me to pray with them for a certain cause, I would be happy to do so.

Could you make my request known to your people by publishing my letter in *Fellowship in Prayer*? I can write in English, German, and Afrikaans. (I would be grateful if correspondents would type or hand write their letters.)

Thank you in anticipation.

May God bless you and your work.

(Mrs.) Marianne C. Smit
P. O. Box 12197
Brandhof
(Bloemfontein)
Republic of South Africa

* * * * *

Members of Fellowship in Prayer in 66 countries form a global spiritual community of men and women—many of whom organize groups or correspond with each other in order to share spiritual insights and to pray for each other. Often they send us letters like the one above.

If you would like to hear from people in your area (or overseas), please send us your name and address, and we will list it in our next issue.

We welcome your comments. Please send them to The Editor, Fellowship in Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

FiP is a treasure! I would not want to be without it.
Romana Hertel; Milwaukee, WI

How very nice of you to give me a subscription to *Fellowship in Prayer*! And what a beautiful little book it is. Thank you. Especially for June Moreau's haiku, "My child's tears." [See *FiP*, Vol. 41, No. 4—*Ed.*] It has been six years since I have been a father to my three children. I miss them deeply. The pain of prison is not the weight of the prison environment, it is the weight of the knowledge that my son waits in a void filled with mis-direction, and my daughters have lost so many positive imprints of the father who will one day share their struggle in life's difficult journey. If all goes well I am to be released from prison soon. I won't be able to live with them, but I will be able to show them that their father is real, loving, supportive, and a guide. If I can guide my children to understand that all truth and wisdom is within themselves, then I might one day smile at the thought of "father" with some sense of accomplishment.
Thank you for your work: it is a blessing.
Ali

I am deeply grateful for your rich and inspiring little book. Each copy is *so* wonderful—I share it with many. May God continue to bless all who minister so devotedly through this publication.
Jutta Ayer; Marblehead, MA

Perhaps your recent notice in *The Washington Post* will motivate many more among us to help generate prayer energy. That energy can enable an ever-present Force for Good to offset the ominous clouds threatening to cast shadows over our entire planet.
William Dailey; Washington, D.C.

This is the most beautiful little book I have ever seen! Thank you.
Amanda White; Chicago, IL

Thank you for *Fellowship in Prayer*. It is not an easy task to achieve the universality that your journal stands for, but you do it successfully and without apparent bias to any specific religion. The way you combine articles by Christians and Jews, Bahais and Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims without blurring the lines between them is something like a joyous and liberating dance. Through *FiP* as through dance, religions become partners but remain individuals.

Robert Levine; San Francisco, CA

I can't tell you how excited I am to have discovered your journal! Please enter a subscription in my name a.s.a.p. I'm currently leading a group in spirituality and prayer, and it will be *so* helpful. Thanks!

Cindy Floyd; North Bay, Ontario, Canada

Many of us who were taught by Tom Berry in seminary and continue as friends are supportive of your work. [See *FiP*, Vol. 41, No. 4—*Ed.*]

Tom Keevey; Trenton, NJ

I would like to request subscriptions for myself and for our mission church in Unalakleet, Alaska. We have a deacon who regularly serves at Sunday services and a traveling priest who visits from Nome. If you have any back issues that you could share with us, we would be grateful.

Sue Leatherberg; Unalakleet, AK

One of my daughters brought me an August, 1990 issue of *FiP*, which I enjoyed very much. I am writing in for a subscription this very day! *FiP* is inspiring, lovely, and thought-provoking. I related to everything I read, and I am looking forward to the coming issues.

Merle Jacobs; Clinton, IO

I congratulate you on the high quality of your publication. With all the negatives in the media, it's a welcome relief to see *Fellowship*.

John Allan; Cambria, CA

Tom Dunham

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This book is printed on acid-free recycled paper.

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